DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 388 CE 081 799

AUTHOR Horsfall, Chris, Ed.
TITLE Leadership Issues: Raising Achievement.
INSTITUTION Learning and Skills Development Agency, London (England).
ISBN ISBN-1-85338-652-9
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 44p.
AVAILABLE FROM Learning and Skills Development Agency, 3 Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH, United Kingdom. Tel: 020 7962 1066; Fax: 020 7840 5401; Web site: http://www.LSagency.org.uk. For full text: http://www.lsagency.org.uk/pubs/dbaseout/download.asp?code=ISBN1853386529.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Administrator Attitudes; *Administrator Effectiveness; *Administrator Role; Adult Learning; Adult Programs; Change Agents; Change Strategies; College Programs; Competence; Definitions; *Educational Administration; Educational Change; Excellence in Education; Foreign Countries; Influences; *Leadership; *Leadership Effectiveness; Leadership Qualities; Literature Reviews; Management Development; Organizational Climate; Organizational Development; Organizational Effectiveness; Outcomes of Education; Postsecondary Education; Predictor Variables
IDENTIFIERS *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This document contains five papers examining the meaning and operation of leadership as a variable affecting student achievement in further education colleges in the United Kingdom. "Introduction" (Chris Horsfall) discusses school effectiveness studies' findings regarding the relationship between leadership and effective schools, distinguishes "management" from "leadership," and introduces the remaining papers. "Leadership in Further Education: A Summary Report from a Review of the Literature" (Stephen J. Sawbridge) focuses on the following topics: what the term "leadership" means; what leaders look like; what leaders do; who leaders are; and how leadership affects student outcomes. "A Shift from Management to Leadership" (Alan Hooper) examines the following topics: the shift from management to leadership; leadership competencies; and the behavior of effective change leaders. "'It All Goes Wrong in the Middle': A Reassessment of the Influence of College Structures on Middle Managers" (Loraine Powell) reports on the implications of a study of middle managers' perceptions of their role and work for extending middle managers' repertoire through management development. "Team Leaders Make a Difference in Raising Achievement!" (Chris Horsfall) describes the development of a short training course for FE managers and reports on other plans to raise student achievement through leadership development. Most papers include substantial bibliographies. (MN)

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Published by the
Learning and Skills Development Agency

www.LSagency.org.uk

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Registered with the Charity Commissioners

Editors: Karin Fancett and Manjinder Sidhu
Designers: Dave Shaw and Tania Field
Printer: Abbey Press Ltd, Halstead, Essex

ISBN 1 85338 652 9

A926/03/01/2500

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Note
The Learning and Skills Development Agency
was formerly known as FEDA.

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Introduction

1

CHRIS HORSFALL

This publication attempts to clarify the meaning and operation of leadership as a variable affecting student achievement in further education colleges. The contributions provide the reader with an opportunity to reflect on the issues associated with leadership as a concept and on the relationship between leadership and raising student achievement.

Tracing and proving the link between leadership and student achievement is not an easy task. There are two principal sources of difficulty. The first arises from the many different ways in which the concept of leadership is defined and perceived to operate in educational institutions. The second comes from the fact that leadership is not one of the first-order variables at work in the interaction between curriculum delivery and student learning.

That said, school effectiveness studies have identified leadership as one of the characteristics associated with effective schools. In this publication, the authors have tried to follow a few key definitions with regard to the terms 'efficiency', 'effectiveness' and 'improvement' (Somekh et al 1999). Thus:

- *Efficiency* is based on a relationship of inputs to outputs.
- *Effectiveness* is the extent to which objectives or purposes of the institution are achieved. It is not the same as efficiency.
- *Improvement* implies change over time.

The way in which these terms are used does, however, tend to muddy the waters. School-based studies which conclude that leadership at senior management level is an important factor in raising levels of achievement are usually based on some assessment of effectiveness and, although less openly stated, on the efficient conduct of the institution. Such studies also talk of 'improvement', but are not always clear whether this relates to efficiency and effectiveness in general or more narrowly to measures of student success.

We are familiar with the assertion that the extent of school-based research evidence on leadership and effectiveness exceeds that about post-16 college effectiveness or the operation of leadership in college contexts. Actually, there is a considerable body of evidence from small-scale development projects concerned with improvements in student achievement and retention in the college context while comparisons that can be made using FEFC Performance Indicator data demonstrate the extent of college improvement overall.

Linking such evidence to a leadership activity (however defined) is less precise. But, as with the schools sector, this has not precluded the topic of leadership appearing in senior staff training programmes. Although such programmes now exist for lower levels of managerial posts, there is little evidence yet of any formal progressive leadership training once staff move from a classroom-based role.

There are also a number of points that can be made about the impact of leadership in the college context. First, as in the school context, the effect of senior management is often discussed in terms of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation as a whole. Improvement in student achievement indices are only part of that account. Second, improvements in student performance are as likely to be the sum of action at class, team or programme level (bottom-up) as they are to be the product of whole-college policies and strategies (top-down). Both processes can and do operate at the same time. An improving college, in terms of student outcomes, may be the product of a number of separate initiatives; together they are presented as 'college improvement'. Tracing the impact of any one 'lever', such as leadership in the present context, is problematic. The impact of leadership is mediated by other people and by other policies and strategies.

The first contribution, by Stephen Sawbridge, presents a summary of a review of the literature on leadership in further education. (The full literature review is available as a research report – Sawbridge 2000.) It includes reference to the schools sector but, for the purposes of this study, the review excluded the higher education sector. It concludes with suggestions for course design and for further research. We do not pause here to summarise the range of theoretical concepts of leadership that are the 'meat' of the literature review. Alan Hooper's article has a more specific focus. He argues that there are differences between leadership and management. In doing so, Alan picks up points already identified in the literature review. The thrust of the article is that it is the behaviour of the leader that is the key to success in the context of the requirement for rapid and repeated change. Loraine Powell's article stresses the importance of context when discussing leadership in colleges. She argues that much greater attention needs to be given to the role of the middle manager if some of the aspirations for change and improvement are to be met.

The meanings of terms such as 'management' and 'leadership' can be the subject of endless, often circular, debate. They are explored within the literature review but it may be helpful for the reader at this stage to be given an insight into the way in which the terms are used, at least in the final chapter of this publication.

- Management has its start point in the organisation. It is taken to involve the conduct and evolutionary development of an institution and its staff by means of rational decisions and performance monitoring underpinned by information systems, policies, procedures and plans.
- Leadership has a start point in the people within the organisation. It is concerned with getting their willing cooperation and contribution towards organisational goals and with meeting their needs as individuals.
- Just as 'managers' exist at all levels of the organisation so, too, can leaders be found at all levels. The latter do not necessarily depend on a formal role position.
- Both activities, leading and managing, are required. The balance between each activity varies both from time to time and also from the position of an individual within an organisation.

- Whether one activity subsumes the other or whether management and leadership exist as poles of activity along a continuum does not have any bearing on the argument presented.
- Incorporation and the essential need to run an efficient and effective organisation have made it inevitable that there has been an emphasis on the top levels of colleges and upon the managerial activities of senior management. Leadership has always been required at that level. Our interest lies in improving the impact of leadership activity at lower levels in colleges.
- These lower levels are those at which course organisation and delivery by a group of staff is the key activity. If leadership is to have a more direct impact on student achievement than is the case with the mediated leadership activity of senior post-holders, then this lower level may be the one level to examine in more detail.

The final article provides an account of focused training already carried out within the Raising Quality and Achievement (RQA) Programme to help individuals in their role as team leaders. That work is firmly based on a set of propositions: that leadership is not the sole prerogative of senior management, that it can be exercised at any structural level of a college and that it is not necessarily tied to positional responsibility. Such a start point also implies that individuals can do something of their own accord to use leadership as one of many factors to raise student success. Such an approach avoids the temptation to accept, exclusively, top-down models and the belief that empowerment somehow rather perversely happens only when 'freedom' is encouraged from 'the top'. Drawing on the earlier articles in the publication, this final article also proposes an approach to further research work with a focus on leadership and student achievement at team-leader level.

The three-part approach that underpins the collection of articles here – research, publication and training – is part of the linked approach to raising achievement that characterises the RQA Programme.

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Leadership in further education

A summary report from a review of the literature

2

STEPHEN J. SAWBRIDGE

Introduction

Educational leadership is currently receiving a great deal of attention as part of the central government drive to improve standards of pupil and student achievement in the UK. The establishment of the National College for School Leadership, for example, underpins the Government's commitment to 'world class leadership in our schools and education service' (DfEE 1999). Concern for the impact of educational leadership in the schools sector is mirrored in post-secondary education. The commitment of Standards Fund money by the FEFC and the incorporation of a Leadership and Governance strand in the Learning and Skills Development Agency's (formerly FEDA's) Raising Quality and Achievement (RQA) Programme, signify the importance which the sector attaches to the development of leadership skills as a factor in raising student achievement.

The development of effective leadership practice in the compulsory phases of education has been informed by a substantial body of research from North America, the UK and elsewhere. In contrast with the schools sector, however, we know little about the nature and impact of leadership on student achievement in post-secondary education. Although a number of studies have touched on aspects of leadership within colleges, usually as part of a more general discussion about changing college cultures or managing the change process itself (Gorringe et al 1994; Peeke 1998), Derek Marsh's Mendip Paper (1992) remains the most recent review of the theory and practice of leadership examined from an FE perspective.

Our understanding of the student-related factors that affect student retention and achievement has improved significantly over the last few years, and colleges, as well as individual course teams, now have a number of tried and tested strategies to implement (Martinez 1995, 1997, 2000; Martinez and Munday 1998). However, the adoption, extension and embedding of these strategies very much depends on the leadership skills of many people working at all levels within colleges.

If the continued development of leadership skills in further education is to be supported and strengthened by a sound theoretical base and by evaluated evidence-based practice, we need to address a number of questions:

- Do we know enough about the nature of leadership within the post-secondary education sector? Indeed, more fundamentally, do we know what we mean by the term leadership as it applies to further education? Is leadership different to management? Is leadership within further education different to leadership within the schools sector or different to leadership in other types of organisation?

- Is leadership a set of skills or competences that can be learned through training, and exercised as required? Or is leadership far more to do with ways of working – sets of behaviours – which effective leaders exhibit?
- Are the leaders within post-secondary institutions just those with senior management roles, or is leadership capability more loosely and widely distributed among all those working within colleges?
- Finally, does effective leadership make a difference to student achievement and success? If so, how is the difference made and where is it most evident?

The literature review (Sawbridge 2000), of which this report is a summary, aims to provide a theoretical underpinning for work on leadership and achievement by FEDA (now the Learning and Skills Development Agency) and others, and seeks to provide answers to the questions about leadership in further education outlined above. It is not intended to be a 'how to' guide of effective leadership practice, but rather to stimulate thinking about the nature of leadership within further education in 2000 and to point to some of the lessons for college effectiveness which are suggested by the predominantly schools-based educational leadership literature.

This summary presents the findings of the literature review in five sections:

- clarification of what we mean by leadership, particularly within an educational context
- an outline of a number of models of, or approaches to, leadership
- a description of the key behaviours which are associated with effective leadership
- leadership roles within organisations
- how leadership impacts on student outcomes.

The final section outlines some key messages for further education and proposes some possible ways forward in terms of strengthening the research and evidence base to support the development of effective leadership practice within the FE sector.

What do we mean by leadership?

Defining what we mean by the term leadership can be particularly problematic. Many writers have attempted to define the concept of leadership, but it appears that leadership itself is most frequently defined by the standpoint taken. In other words, leadership is defined principally by the models, roles and behaviours which are used to describe it (Hallinger and Heck 1998; Leithwood et al 1999). The majority of writers, however, would agree that:

- leadership is a process of influencing
- leadership can be exercised by people in organisations who do not possess formal authority
- leadership implies followers
- leadership involves the achievement of goals or objectives.

The final two features are inextricably linked in the sense that followers are only followers for the period of time for which they are engaged in the achievement of the task for which they are being led. In other words, the leadership–follower relationship is transitory and likely to change as the demands of the common task require.

While it is far from easy to define what leadership is, most writers appear to be fairly clear about what leadership is not. The idea that leadership is not the same as management enjoys widespread consensus.

Leadership may best be seen as the exercise of influence to move an organisation forward, whereas management is concerned largely with the maintenance of existing systems and structures. Leaders are generally people who do the right things, whereas managers are people who do things right. Michael Fullan (1991) draws the following distinction: 'Leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration. Management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done, working effectively with people.'

Leadership, then, is a process of influence with the purpose of enabling groups and individuals to achieve goals or objectives. It contrasts with the process of management (to which it is closely related) by virtue of the fact that it is dynamic, and involves organisational change – changes to systems, to structures and to ways of working.

What does leadership look like?

Approaches to how to be a good, effective leader have evolved over time in parallel with the development of theories of organisations and management. Fifty or more years ago, leadership was thought of as a set of individual qualities or traits – 'the right stuff'. Leaders were born not made. Leadership is now more commonly thought of as either a set of behaviours, or as a process, or as a combination of both (Hooper and Potter 1997).

In education, a number of writers have developed models of leadership practice which draw together common features associated with both leadership processes and behaviours. These models are not of course pure models – they exist in combination and there is some overlap between them. They do, however, provide a useful means of describing the kinds of approaches to leadership that we frequently find in educational organisations (Leithwood et al 1999).

Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership has been the dominant educational leadership model in North America since approximately 1980. It focuses on the development of behaviours that directly influence teachers in their relationships with students and, in particular, the planning and delivery of teaching and learning. The model emphasises the leadership role of headteachers, whose influence is derived from both their formal position within the school and equally importantly from their own expertise. Headteachers and other senior managers should have a thorough knowledge of teaching, learning and curriculum in order to be able to support staff in improving their own practice and to monitor the quality and effectiveness of learning delivery. They need to be supportive and have credibility with other teachers as experienced practitioners.

The model is often criticised because it overemphasises the role of the headteacher and therefore tends to reinforce a hierarchical structure with a top-down leadership style. Associated with this is the emphasis on the headteacher as the leading professional. This often gives rise to competition and tension between the headteacher's role as a senior manager and as an instructional leader – good managers are not necessarily expert practitioners and vice versa.

In further education in the UK, managers tend to move away from *direct* involvement with the curriculum as they take on more managerial responsibilities. The extent to which the instructional leadership model is the dominant one in colleges is therefore questionable. There are of course exceptions, notably in sixth form colleges where smaller numbers of teaching staff and less organisational complexity tend to lead to senior managers having a direct teaching commitment. This does not, of course, on its own, make them effective instructional leaders. A narrower institutional mission may also be linked to a more instructional leadership approach.

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In colleges, instructional leadership has much to offer at curriculum management level (programme area managers, course team managers), particularly in terms of embedding new teaching and learning, and student support strategies. Those with leadership roles at this level are also likely to have strong curriculum development and delivery responsibilities. Their expertise as experienced practitioners combined with their formal leadership roles should enable them to monitor the quality of teaching and learning (through, for instance, observation of teaching and learning) and to give support and advice in order to maximise student outcomes.

Transformational leadership

The concept of transformational leadership was originally devised in the USA in the late 1970s and has since been adapted, modified and popularised by a number of writers. Unlike instructional leadership, it is not a uniquely educational model. The model emphasises the importance of leadership behaviours and these are often characterised as the 'Four Is' (Bass and Avolio 1994):

- *Idealised influence* – the ability of the leader to gain the trust, respect and support of those being led. This might otherwise be termed charisma which brings it close to the traits concept of leadership.
- *Inspirational motivation* – the ability to inspire and focus the attention of individuals on the achievement of shared goals, often using imagery and symbols.
- *Intellectual stimulation* – a culture of challenge and questioning where individuals are constantly encouraged to reassess both ways of working and the values of the organisation including those of the leader.
- *Individualised consideration* – the support that is available to individuals to allow them to develop in order to meet new challenges and goals.

The model emphasises empowerment, with the overriding concern of the leader being to create the right climate and support structures in which individuals can achieve organisational goals. Although leadership is exercised by those in formal positions of authority, it can be found more widely. In fact, because leadership is behaviourally based it can be exercised by anyone. The essence of the model is captured in the often cited cliché 'the ability to get ordinary people to do extra-ordinary things'.

In education, transformational leadership is widely advocated. Writers have emphasised the need for transformational leaders to concentrate on:

- building school vision and establishing school goals offering individualised support and providing intellectual challenge and stimulation for staff
- modelling best practice and organisational values
- creating a productive school culture
- developing structures to foster participation in school decisions (Leithwood et al 1999).

The leadership practice which is most frequently written about in further education, often by principals themselves, tends to be of the transformational kind. There is usually strong evidence to support visionary and inspiring leadership accompanied by concern and support for all staff. However, the extent to which transformational leadership is evident at other levels within colleges is much less clear. The emergence of a variety of 'champion' roles provides some evidence of the intention to bring about change and innovation through the leadership skills of fellow practitioners. However, this kind of leadership role is very much in its infancy in most colleges.

Moral leadership

Moral leadership is based on the assumption that educational and other organisations operate within a framework of absolute values. The leader's role is to:

- influence the adoption of a clear set of organisational values
- manage conflict over the interpretation of basic values
- commit others to the values that leaders themselves believe to be good.

Once agreed and adopted, the value system forms the foundation on which subsequent decision-making is based. In further education, features of this kind of leadership can be seen in some denominationally governed sixth form colleges.

Participative leadership

In common with moral leadership, participative leadership emphasises consultation and the importance of the decision-making processes of the group. Unlike moral leadership, however, participation and consultation are usually based on more pragmatic decision-making needs rather than on any ideas of 'moral rightness' or 'what ought to be'. The need to establish a sense of ownership of decisions usually underpins use of the model.

Participative leadership can be seen as leading to:

- better quality decisions
- greater consensus and acceptance
- better understanding of the decision by those responsible for implementing it
- the development of decision-making skills throughout the organisation
- enhanced motivation and job satisfaction for staff involved in decision-making
- resolution of conflict and the development of the team.

However, participative leadership often results in conflicts associated with:

- the need for consensus and at the same time the need for strong and authoritative leadership
- the need to consult and involve while at the same time making decisions which are timely and efficient in terms of the resources used
- the need to reconcile accountability for the implementation of externally derived policy with the values and systems orientation of staff within a school or college (Wildy and Louden 2000).

Elements of participative leadership feature in FE colleges and are often reported in terms of a consultative, open management style. This kind of leadership is frequently seen in relation to the development of the college mission.

Managerial leadership

This model of leadership is predominant in the UK and is strongly evidenced in further education. The model is sometimes referred to as transactional or functional and is widely associated with writer John Adair. Teams and teamworking are important in the model, and the leader's primary responsibility is to balance the needs of the team, the task on which the team is engaged, and the individual needs of team members. The leadership role is strongly associated with the team leader rather than any of the other team members and there is therefore an emphasis on leader training and skills development. Leadership behaviours are of secondary importance to leadership skills.

The draft FENTO *Management standards for further education* (2000) reinforce the skills approach to leadership inherent in the managerial leadership model. The capacity for managers to lead teams and individuals is reduced to a set of management activities performed to a set of predetermined criteria and largely presupposing a management by objectives approach. However, there is a strong emphasis within the Standards on the development of personal attributes that are not designed to be assessed. A number of these attributes have the potential to reflect leadership behaviours, for example the ability to motivate and influence others.

Contingent leadership

Closely related to the managerial leadership model is contingent or situational leadership. Leadership is viewed as situationally focused – in other words variations in the contexts for decision-making require different leadership responses. Leaders therefore need to master a range of leadership practices including the development of different leadership styles that can be adopted in varied settings.

Organisational learning

The concept of the learning organisation developed during the late 1980s and early 1990s. It is often associated with the work of Peter Senge. Senge's view was that just as individuals have the capacity to continually learn, so too do organisations. This new type of organisation requires a new type of leadership – one in which the purpose of leadership is to build organisational capacity for learning.

The leader has three important roles to perform:

- As *designer*, the leader's role is to design the organisational learning process so that people are able to solve problems and achieve personal mastery. This requires new leadership behaviours including coaching, mentoring and helping others to learn.
- As *steward*, the leader has a responsibility not only for developing a personal vision for the organisation but ensuring that the vision reflects the common aspirations of others working in it.
- As *teacher*, the leader's role is not just about coaching and supporting individuals but more importantly about developing 'systemic understanding' – the ability to see how the various parts of the organisation fit together and inter-relate, and how learning can be transferred from one section or from one situation to another (Senge 1990).

Michael Fullan has adapted Senge's ideas on leadership for an educational context. He draws four conclusions about the nature of leadership in that context:

- neither strong unilateral leaders nor leaders as weak followers are appropriate
- the range of leadership skills and behaviours required are increasingly sophisticated
- leaders should be able to influence and coordinate change processes
- leadership in learning organisations becomes systemic – everyone is able to exercise leadership because of a shared commitment to the achievement of organisational goals (Fullan 1993).

As with transformational leadership, the development of colleges as learning organisations is frequently advocated.

What do leaders do?

We have already seen that leadership is broadly a process of influencing people towards the achievement of a goal or goals. But what is it that people do that identifies them as leaders? The leadership literature points to a number of activities variously described as styles, skills, competences and behaviours which leaders exercise (Yukl 1989). We must also be careful to draw a distinction between leaders and managers. Leadership is not the sole remit of managers. Leadership skills are not just a subset of management skills. Leadership and management are distinct, though nonetheless complementary.

Sometimes, differentiating between what is a leadership behaviour and what is a leadership skill can be difficult. Leadership skills and behaviours may perhaps best be viewed as poles on a continuum of leadership activity. At one pole are those skills which can be learned and practised in an objective way; at the other pole are those behaviours and attributes which are inherently associated with interpersonal skills and ways of working. So, for example, offering individualised support may be regarded as a skill, while being firm and purposeful is clearly associated with a way of working and is far more behaviourally based. Both describe characteristics of effective leaders as given in the literature.

Leadership skills

However leadership activities are described, there are clear indications in the literature of those activities that are central to effective leadership. These are described below.

Vision building

There is almost universal agreement among leadership researchers and writers on the importance of vision building as one of the key leadership activities. The key activities for the leader are to:

- develop the organisation vision, usually through consultation and participation
- secure commitment to it by inspiring and motivating.

Vision building in further education is often associated with the rather anodyne mission statements that most colleges adopted around the time of incorporation in 1993. This is not the kind of vision building usually associated with sound educational leadership that should reflect clarity of purpose and direction and be communicated in a way that inspires and motivates (Gorringe et al 1994).

Organisational culture

The necessity to develop a strong organisational culture that supports the vision is a point which emerges from several leadership studies. In the organisational learning model the development of a culture which sees everyone as a learner is a central leadership role (Southworth 1994). Leaders influence organisational culture in other ways too – through the high expectations they have in schools of both staff and students, and through their modelling of the kind of practice which they wish to foster in others.

People

In as much as leadership has been defined as the process of influencing others, all leadership activity can be seen as involving people. The importance of the interaction between the leader and others in the organisation is central to all the leadership models although it may take different forms and therefore, by implication, requires different sets of skills and behaviours. These interactions include:

- developing structures for shared decision-making, consultation and collaboration
- giving feedback and advice on teaching and learning practice
- motivating and developing supportive working relationships within teams.

Leadership behaviours

In addition to the three sets of leadership activities already outlined, the behaviours associated with the leader's interpersonal style are equally important, particularly in two respects.

- Leadership behaviour should be neither overly autocratic nor unduly democratic, but should instead focus on the primary purpose of leadership that is to influence others. This can be done through consultation, persuasion, negotiation and collaboration rather than solely through the exercise of power. The behaviour does, however, need to be authoritative.
- Effective leadership behaviours relate to the context in which they are used. Effective leaders have the capability to judge what is the most appropriate behaviour or the right balance of behaviours in a given set of circumstances. The implication, too, is that some individuals will be more effective leaders in given circumstances than others because of a predisposition to a particular set of behaviours. Extending the point further, some individuals will be better placed to lead teams on some tasks than on others because of the context in which the team's objectives are to be achieved.

Who are the leaders?

Traditionally, leaders have been thought of as either those people at the pinnacle of the organisation or those people within the organisation who occupy formal managerial positions. However, recent thinking sees leadership more widely distributed throughout organisations because people can adopt and use leadership behaviours that do not require formal authority or power. Leadership is an organisational quality that runs through all roles. It is systemic and has the potential to be exercised by everyone. This leads to a paradox where the concept of team leadership and the idea of leadership being everywhere appear to conflict. The most effective leader within the team – the person most capable of exercising leadership skills and behaviours – may indeed not be the same person as the one who has formal power and authority (Murgatroyd and Morgan 1992; Fullan 1993; Ogawa and Bossert 1997).

The number of people with formal leadership roles is usually a function of:

- the centre of influence within an organisation and the degree of hierarchical authority
- organisation size
- the degree of decentralisation and operational autonomy.

The leadership role of the middle manager in FE colleges is critical and requires the use of a complex set of skills and behaviours associated with both managerial leadership and instructional leadership models. This is clearly a challenge.

Women leaders

A number of studies have examined the experience of women as leaders in response to widespread concern about the cultural and institutional barriers to progress in organisational leadership which women face. The extent to which women leaders possess a unique set of leadership characteristics is the subject of much debate.

The picture of women's leadership which appears to be emerging is that the qualities in which women have distinct strengths are those frequently associated with effective leadership. They are often derived from the particular set of challenges and experiences which women face in achieving senior management positions. So they tend to emphasise behaviours such as collaboration, persuasion and negotiation. However, these qualities are not gender specific – they need to be adopted by male leaders too (Fullan 1993; Coffey et al 1999).

Does leadership affect student outcomes?

The is the critical question. Does educational leadership make a difference to student success? Much of the research into educational leadership has focused on the impact of leadership on student outcomes and/or school effectiveness in a more general sense. The context for this research is the schools sector – there are no recent studies on the impact of leadership on student outcomes in further education. Two studies in particular – one predominantly from a North American context, one from the UK – are helpful in identifying the characteristics of leadership which appear to make a difference to student outcomes and school effectiveness.

Can leadership enhance school effectiveness?

The review by Hallinger and Heck (1998) of over 40 research projects undertaken between 1980 and 1995 is the most extensive study to date on the impact of school leadership on school effectiveness. They found that leadership does make a difference to student outcomes and school effectiveness but that the relationship is largely an indirect one. The impact of leadership is usually moderated by the actions of others. They concluded that these leadership effects operate on student and school outcomes in four domains or avenues:

- *Purpose* – This is the development of shared vision, values, aims and goals for the school. In the studies reviewed, the headteacher's involvement in goal setting and sharing was the most consistently found influence on school effectiveness.
- *Structure and social networks* – This is the capacity of the leader to engage with and manipulate the relationships between participants in the school. It includes the ability of the leader to develop and promote collaborative and participative decision-making processes. In turn, this leads to a more distributed pattern of leadership with leaders evident throughout the school.

- *People* – The school leadership role is seen as an essentially people-focused activity as opposed to the planning and resource management roles of the educational manager. This domain emphasises the school leader's role in directly influencing individuals within the school organisation through:
  - direct support for teachers in classroom practice and in solving instructional problems
  - the provision of other forms of individualised support
  - the modelling of desired behaviours
  - intellectual challenge and stimulation.
- *Organisational culture* – The leader's role in creating and maintaining school culture or climate is the fourth avenue of influence. The culture should reflect the school vision and values and support the development of staff. In schools which value and support organisational and individual learning and where staff are secure, stimulated and supported, the quality of teaching and learning are likely to be high.

In conclusion to their review, Hallinger and Heck point out that effective leaders do not make effective schools but rather they are a key influence in shaping the values and practice of others within a variety of contexts.

Key characteristics of effective schools

In a study carried out for Ofsted in 1995 by the Institute of Education at the University of London, Pam Sammons and colleagues identified professional leadership as one of 11 key characteristics of effective schools (Sammons et al 1995). They noted that no research studies identified effective schools with weak leadership. Leadership within schools, they claim, is a mix of the individual qualities of leaders, their leadership style, their approach to the management of change and their orientation to the vision, values and goals of the school. They identify three features as being frequently associated with effective leadership:

- *Firm and purposeful* – The focus here is on the leadership role of the headteacher, particularly with regard to promoting and managing change. Leadership should be authoritative but avoid extremes of autocratic or overly democratic practice. It is the balance of behaviour that is important, as well as its fit to the situation. Effective leaders are capable of matching their approach to the context.
- *A participative approach* – This is seen in the development of a strong and supportive senior management team capable of sharing leadership responsibility. It is also evident in the way in which other staff are more widely involved in the decision-making processes – in relation to curriculum management and planning for example. In larger schools leadership has of necessity to be shared, so that the leadership role of heads of departments or other 'middle managers' assumes some importance.
- *The leading professional* – This third characteristic emphasises the headteacher's role not just as a senior manager but also as the leading professional. The effective headteacher is seen as someone who has professional credibility based on an understanding of curriculum management and delivery at all levels – including classroom practice. Headteachers who are able to exercise this level of professional competence are able to offer practical support and assistance to teachers and be highly visible within the school as a result of classroom visits and their involvement curriculum planning. The overriding importance of this aspect of the leadership role is that, through its exercise, headteachers are able to promote other critical effectiveness characteristics such as purposeful teaching, concentration on teaching and learning, high expectations and so on.

The messages for leadership in further education

Leadership and further education

The research evidence from the schools sector points to leadership as a key factor in the effectiveness of educational institutions. Precisely how the relationship works is still unclear although it is likely to be through the impact of leadership on others rather than through any direct interaction. Particularly important are the activities of leadership associated with:

- developing organisational vision, values and purpose
- initiating and maintaining the network of social relationships and structures which facilitate the distribution of leadership
- creating an organisational climate or culture which values initiative and encourages organisational learning
- providing individuals with appropriate support, guidance and development to enable them to plan and deliver high quality teaching and learning.

Equally important are the largely behavioural characteristics associated with ways in which leaders work. These include:

- leadership styles which reflect a balance of approaches to decision-making
- the ability to adopt the most appropriate leadership style in a given context
- behaviours associated with inspiring and motivating individuals to achieve.

The skills and behaviours associated with effective leadership are neither hierarchy nor gender based and have the potential to be exercised to a greater or lesser degree by everyone. However, some organisational cultures and systems encourage and nurture greater levels of distributed leadership than others.

Although there are exceptions, leadership in FE colleges in the UK largely conforms to a managerial or functional leadership model. The characteristics associated with effective educational leadership in the schools sector are more closely associated with instructional and transformational models. This suggests, therefore, that colleges need to develop leaders who are not just capable of leading on strategy and policy within a managerial leadership model, but who are also able to influence the embedding of excellent teaching and learning and student support through their curriculum knowledge and expertise. Senior managers who teach, who are involved in the recruitment of staff, and who are involved in curriculum and staff development, clearly demonstrate a commitment to the college's vision and values.

The messages from the leadership research need to be appreciated by other bodies within the post-secondary sector. For example:

- The draft standards for management within further education must ensure that leadership skills are not merely reduced to a set of measurable skills or competences, and that the importance of personal attributes and behaviours are equally stressed.
- Future inspection regimes need to acknowledge and evidence the importance of leadership as a contributory factor to college effectiveness.

A research agenda

There is little in the way of published research or evaluated practice to support effective leadership development in further education. Our understanding of what works in educational leadership is drawn largely from research in the schools sector. Therefore, if we are to improve leadership practice in colleges, we urgently need to know more about:

- the nature and extent of college leadership
- the links with improving standards of student achievement
- the transferability of schools sector research into further education.

We need to find out what it is about leadership that makes the difference to student outcomes so that we know where to focus our improvement and development efforts. We need to conduct a research programme that focuses equally on the *characteristics* and *nature* of leadership, and on the processes of leadership in colleges. This might be done through:

- A programme of fieldwork with a cross-section of respondents working within a range of post-16 providers (possibly including schools). Views of other bodies working within the sector would also be valuable. This would lead to a synthesis of the current state of leadership practice in colleges and help to establish a baseline.
- A programme of quantitative research using a self-administered or preferably 360-degree questionnaire to identify key leadership variables suitable for correlation and further analysis against student outcome variables. This could be undertaken with a small but representative group of colleges, who would benefit from a better view of their own leadership capacity. The potential for process benchmarking to provide similar kinds of data and feedback would also be worth investigating and would link to work currently under way at the Learning and Skills Development Agency within the RQA Programme.
- A synthesis of evidence from the FEFC inspection system could help to identify possible relationships between variables as well as to clarify the 'received wisdom' with regard to leadership within the sector.
- A series of carefully designed case studies to observe leadership processes in practice (following Bridget Somekh's suggestion in her *Scoping study* 1998). These might be matched against a similar series of case studies from the schools sector to identify the transferability of research findings.
- The development of a good practice network for leadership along the lines of other networks currently being facilitated by the Agency.
- A series of action research projects into leadership development and its impact using a similar approach to the highly regarded RQA Development Projects strand. This would provide a further opportunity to test the transferability of research outcomes from the schools sector as well as other non-educational sectors.
- An evaluation of the leadership component in the successful (or unsuccessful) embedding of other achievement-orientated initiatives in colleges, such as the Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative and Information Learning Technology strategies.

The FE leadership research agenda needs a steer from the sector itself if it is to be useful and credible. The Agency is well placed to coordinate this function. The RQA Programme Leadership for Achievement strand provides a means of raising the profile of leadership within the sector. Inviting participation in a series of expert seminars and the development of an effective leadership network would be a straightforward and immediate place to start.

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A shift from management to leadership

3

ALAN HOOPER

Introduction

The rapid and continuous rate of change in today's society is having a fundamental effect on leadership and management. In particular, there is a growing recognition of the need for a new type of leadership to cope with the changing environment.

Leaders are expected to produce better results year on year by establishing an ethos of continuous improvement in an environment of increasing chaos and rapidly changing technology. This is true for both the private and public sectors, for the car industry as well as for further education. So, is there anything we can learn from, say, Honda which will help to improve performance in further education?

This article will address this issue by first looking at the changing relationship between leadership and management, and then by considering the competencies and behaviour of effective change leaders.

From management to leadership

The shift from management to leadership has been brought about by the fundamental requirement for people to cope with the management of change. John Kotter (1990) suggested that management is about planning, organising and controlling, whereas leadership is about setting direction, aligning people – and motivating and inspiring them. It is fundamentally about people.

Kotter's thinking is reinforced by Warren Bennis' (1989) publication, *On becoming a leader*, in which he considered the differences between the behaviours and the actions of a leader and a manager (see Table 1). Management is about control, predictability and short-term results. In contrast, leadership is more emotional; it is about unlocking human potential and working towards a more visionary future. The short-term approach of the industrial nations of the Western world indicates that the emphasis has been on the managerial approach rather than a balanced mix of both approaches. The balance now needs to be redressed by developing the leadership ability of all managers at every level within the organisation. This does not mean that an individual should become either a leader or a manager. For organisations to be successful in today's environment of constant change it is necessary to have some people who are good at both. While many organisations are well-administered and well-controlled, few have the appropriate vision, innovation and original thinking.

TABLE 1
The manager and the leader (Bennis 1989)

THE MANAGER	THE LEADER
Administers	Innovates
Is a copy	Is an original
Maintains	Develops
Focuses on systems	Focuses on people
Relies on control	Inspires trust
Short-range view	Long-range view
Asks how and when	Asks what and why
Eye on the bottom line	Eye on the horizon
Imitates	Originates
Accepts the status quo	Challenges the status quo
Obeys orders without question	Obeys when appropriate but thinks
Does things right	Does the right things
Is trained	Learns
Managers operate within the culture	*Leaders create the culture*

The movement from management to leadership is reflected in the shift from transactional to transformational leadership. Philip Sadler (1999) draws a neat distinction between the two: 'Transactional Leadership occurs when managers take the initiative in offering some form of need satisfaction in return for something valued by employees, such as pay – Transformational Leadership, however, is the process of engaging the commitment of employees in the context of shared values and shared vision.' The conditions for such movement have been made easier by the development of a portfolio lifestyle which acknowledges that there is more to life than just work.

There have been other shifts to reinforce the movement from management to leadership. These have included a movement from solo to team leadership; a requirement for remote leadership; an increasing need to lead ad hoc teams; and the realisation that 'e-mail' leadership is becoming a growing necessity. As organisations have de-layered and become flatter, so leaders have empowered their people more. This has resulted in a voluntary decision by many of them to allow their power to be eroded, and also to share more information. Senior managers have not been given sufficient credit for this shift in their behaviour, which has been all the more remarkable because it has been voluntary.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this transformation has been its speed. In the dying years of the 20th century, leaders who behaved as they used to at the end of the 1980s have appeared anachronistic, old-fashioned and out of touch. Within 10 years the style of leadership has changed fundamentally. What is now recognised is that in order to transform their people, managers need to be competent leaders. Furthermore, effective leaders do certain things that ineffective leaders do not. This has led to the identification of certain leadership competencies.

The leadership competencies

First, leaders need to *set the direction* for the organisation, which incorporates a vision of the future. Second, effective leaders are *influential examples* and role models because they are aware that people are more influenced by what they see than by what they are told. Third, they are *effective communicators*, both in communicating the vision, and also inspiring their people in such a way that it causes an emotional effect. Fourth, provided that the leader is convincing, followers will want to be part of the operation and work towards the common goal themselves. This process is one of *alignment*. Fifth, effective leaders *bring out the best in people*. This involves a holistic approach which embraces motivation, empowerment, coaching and encouragement. Sixth, leaders need to be proactive in a situation of continual change. In effect, they become *change agents*. The seventh attribute is the ability to *make decisions in times of crisis and for the ambiguous*.

These seven competencies, which are discussed in detail in *The business of leadership* (Hooper and Potter 1997), are the skills required to lead effectively at all levels, in the appropriate style, in order to add value to an organisation. In addition, these competencies enable leaders to make significant improvement to the performance of their organisations.

The behaviour of effective change leaders

The identification of the 'seven competencies' by Hooper and Potter led to further research at the Centre for Leadership Studies, University of Exeter, to discover more about the changing nature of leadership in organisations (Hooper and Potter 2000). As part of our research, we undertook structured interviews with 25 significant leaders, in the UK and abroad, in order to discover more about their behaviours. In particular, we wanted to discover whether value-based leadership delivered results in an environment of constant change. Those interviewed were from both the public and private sectors, and included people such as Sir Peter Davis (Sainsburys), Sir Stuart Hampson (John Lewis Partnership), Sir Geoffrey Holland (University of Exeter), Tim Melville-Ross (IoD), Jim Mowatt (TGWU), Gail Rebuck (Random House), John Roberts (The Post Office) and Air Vice Marshall Tony Stables (RAF). From the interviews, five key aspects emerged about the behaviour of effective change leaders.

Creating understanding

'One of the most difficult aspects of leadership is getting people to consider the reason for change.' This comment by John Roberts (Chief Executive, The Post Office) underlines the problem of creating understanding throughout an organisation which is involved in continual change. One of the really difficult issues for leaders is to turn the vision into reality.

This creation of understanding is not just difficult for the followers – it is also testing for the leaders. An environment of continual change means that those operating at senior management level are often struggling with highly complex issues with only a limited time to analyse all the relevant factors.

The creation of understanding is also made more difficult for two further reasons: fear of uncertainty and a paucity of intellectual capability throughout organisations. The fear of uncertainty is a natural human instinct that affects all of us from time to time. It is therefore hardly surprising that uncertainty can destabilise most people, and, unless this issue is addressed properly, it can spread like a cancer throughout an organisation.

It is the role of leaders (at every level) to tackle 'uncertainty' systematically by pursuing a policy of open communication, using every opportunity to discuss and explain all the relevant aspects of the change process – and this involves a good deal of listening.

The second issue is a much more fundamental problem. There appears to be a paucity of intellectual capability on the part of many leaders in significant leadership roles in many of our organisations. In his usual succinct way, Warren Bennis (1998) put his finger on the heart of the problem when he said: 'In a knowledge workers' society, we will need leaders at every level who are extraordinarily brainy.' He went on to explain that in order to deal with complex issues, we needed to rethink how to educate people for business.

This is central to the work of the learning and skills sector. Unless we re-educate people and develop their cognitive skills, organisations will not be able to manage the challenges of the future.

Effective communications

Part of the process of creating understanding is effective communications. It is particularly difficult when managing change, because leaders are often struggling to clarify their own thinking as well as trying to communicate a clear message. Unless there is clarity of thought, there is a danger that leaders will give a mixed message, which can lead to confusion.

The important first step is to have a clear strategy right from the outset. Once the general way forward is clear, it is essential that the senior management team maintain open communications with every individual in that group. This is especially difficult in times of change due to the complexity, speed and volume of work. Examples of effective procedures include those used by the military (fully tested in conditions of war) and the 'circles' management system adopted by Honda. It is also important that the open system used at senior level is reflected right throughout the organisation. The ability for every individual to challenge ideas and query points of detail is essential in order to develop confidence in the trust and the integrity of the organisation (all the chief executives we spoke to stressed the importance of this point).

Having 'set the direction and ensured that it is translated internally' (John Roberts), the final part of the process is persistence. Tim Melville-Ross (then, Director General, Institute of Directors) stressed the importance of this behaviour: 'in order to ensure effective change it is important to give a persistent message the whole time'. This requires planning, energy and patience.

Of all the points raised in this section, this latter one is probably the most important. It is the behaviour of the leader which will have the greatest impact, and its importance is based on the fact that only by spending time and energy in meeting people and explaining the message will the genuine concerns of people be addressed. 'In order for people to change, they have to be convinced of the reasons for change' (Jim Mowatt, National Secretary, Transport and General Workers' Union).

In order to be *really* effective, however, this behaviour of 'the leader' needs to be reflected by the rest of the management team.

Releasing potential

Perhaps the key to achieving effective change leadership is to enable the release of all of the potential possessed by people within the organisation. In most companies this potential lies dormant, and will remain so unless something is done to change the status quo.

The first point to make is that this is probably the most rewarding and exciting thing that a leader can achieve. All the chief executives we spoke to referred to the sense of pride in seeing their people achieve their potential. Ken Keir (Managing Director, Honda UK)

linked it to the creation of understanding and said: 'the most rewarding aspect of leading an organisation through change is seeing the comprehension of understanding by everyone involved in the process'. Not only is it most rewarding, it could be argued that releasing potential of individuals is one of the fundamental aspects of leadership. In order to manage this really effectively it requires the leader to, quite literally, excite people to achieve their best.

It is generally acknowledged that 'ownership' is a key ingredient to effecting change. However, 'ownership really has to mean something' (Sir Stuart Hampson, Chairman, John Lewis Partnership). The supermarket chain Asda has an excellent means of motivation, through share options, and this helps to encourage everybody to get involved in the process. However, money does not have to be the only form of motivation; indeed, studies would lead us to believe that it is less important than is generally thought. Ownership embraces anything that enables people to feel that their contribution is both worthwhile and valued.

Finally, in an environment of continual change, leaders need to champion innovation and creativity. Unless they achieve this, organisations will be unable to keep up with the pace of change in the future. In an era of exciting technological change it would seem imperative that the leaders of tomorrow acquire the necessary skill to support individuals to develop their creativity to the full.

Personal example

Personal example is a fundamental aspect of leadership and nowhere is this more vital than during the process of managing change. The way leaders behave, the manner in which they treat people, their attitude to ethical matters, and their reaction in periods of difficulty are all observed by their followers. The subsequent commitment to change will depend fundamentally on the judgement of that observation. The key point here is that nobody knows better about the behaviour of a leader than his or her followers. If they are not convinced, they will not follow.

In answer to the question 'what is important in the way you do business?', all the chief executives we spoke to said: 'integrity'. Integrity, honesty and trust are such simple words, but their implications for leadership are enormous. They provide the glue which binds leaders and followers together. However, unlike quick-setting adhesive, it takes a long time to establish this bond as both sides test out their relationship and gradually establish a pattern of working together. It is grounded in transparency, and the relationship will be tested time and time again before both sides are satisfied that it works.

One of the most effective ways of building trust is for the leader to share the working experience of followers. This can take many forms but, fundamentally, it involves managers getting out of their offices and discovering what life is really like at the coal-face. Most of the chief executives we spoke to spend a significant time away from their offices, meeting people. For instance, Ken Keir spends three and a half days a week away, Jim Mowatt is known for visiting his members on their night-shifts and, as the Retail Director of Woolworths, Leo McKee visited around 200 stores per year.

All that we have discussed so far could equally have been applied to the management of the status quo. However, in order to lead an organisation through continuous change something extra is required – leaders need to 'champion' change. This involves an enthusiasm for change, reinforced with energy and passion. Unless there is enthusiastic leadership, the organisation is unlikely to embrace change fully.

The example required of leaders can best be summarised by the three 'Ps' – passion, praise and pride. A passion for change; praise for people's efforts; and pride in the results of the team.

Self-pacing

The last of the behaviours exemplified by the leaders we spoke to is 'self-pacing'. Everyone is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the speed of change; it is therefore hardly surprising that those at the top of organisations are finding it exhausting. When asked what she found difficult to do, Gail Rebuck (Chief Executive, Random House Group) replied: 'having the energy to cope with the pace of change'.

This 'self-pacing' can be developed, just like any other skill. Our sample chief executives were particularly good at managing their time and it was noticeable that all of them had a routine for coping with their enormous time pressures. What all of them had realised, from early on in their careers, was the essential importance of living a disciplined life as a means of controlling the pressures of time. This essential discipline is more important for leaders today than it has ever been.

Linked with time-management is the requirement to maintain a balance in one's life. Once again, our chief executives were good at this and made a point of managing the 'home–work' conflict. All of them were quite clear about the importance of this balance. It gave them the opportunity to maintain energy levels over a lengthy period, as well as giving their brain a rest from the relentless demands of their job.

The third aspect of 'self-pacing' is that of delegation. This becomes even more prevalent during change, especially as leaders can be tempted to respond to increasing workload by doing it all themselves, rather than distributing appropriate jobs to those who are more capable.

So far we have concerned ourselves with the requirement of the leader to pace themselves, but this is equally important for the organisation, and it is therefore an outcome of leadership. Good leaders are sensitive to the impact of the change process on their people and adjust the pace of change accordingly. They are aware of the need to encourage ownership through dialogue and empowerment. Good leaders adopt a flexibility to the pace of change, matching it to the capability of their people so that, ideally, they are able to take everything in their stride. This takes time – much longer than is generally realised.

This skill (for it is a skill) of flexibility, is the mark of a proficient leader. It requires hard work, sensitivity and, quite often, the requirement for the leader to admit that they have got the 'self-pacing' wrong. However, this ability, which is so often learnt through bitter experience, is very important because it can be the key to operating at optimum level over an extended period.

Summary

The interviews with those actively involved in leading organisations through change have revealed what is actually happening as they wrestle with the dilemmas of constant change. There has been a significant shift from management to leadership as organisations are transformed to meet the new challenge of a rapidly changing world. Interestingly, many of the fundamentals of leadership have not changed; it is only the context and the speed of change that is different.

The key to effective change leadership is the behaviour of leaders at all levels. Leadership today is complex and demands certain leadership competencies. It also requires subtlety, flexibility, emotional intelligence, effective intellect, an ability to really listen – and the requirement to be a champion of change.

Winning hearts and minds of people is not easy. It requires energy and persistence. Being a change leader can also be a lonely position, which is one of the reasons for developing good teamwork, sharing the load and making the most of the available talent. The purpose is to release the potential of all the people in the organisation and to do it in such a way that the best of the old methods are balanced with the best of the new.

Finally, it is important to have fun. This was best summed-up by Sir Stuart Hampson in his observation that 'happiness is a fundamental objective of management'. If people are happy in their work then they will perform consistently well. The key to winning hearts and minds is for the leader to create the right atmosphere for happiness to thrive. This is as true for the learning and skills sector as it is for business.

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'It all goes wrong in the middle'

A reassessment of the influence of college structures on middle managers

4

LORAINE POWELL

Introduction

Over the last decade, the two recurring themes of public sector reform have been decentralisation and self-management (Pollitt et al 1997). For the further education sector, these freedoms were thought to generate improvement in organisational performance, greater productivity at the individual level and, as a consequence, the desired raising of achievement in relation to national targets. Traditionally, management strategy and culture have been the integrating forces within successive waves of organisational change, from the first concerns with quality management and strategic planning in the 1970s; the focus on excellence, vision and leadership in the 1980s; to developing learning organisations in the 1990s. Each successive wave has in turn had an impact on the overall structure. Will bigger and better strategies and culture change programmes by themselves produce better performance? Colleges in the 21st century, faced with technological advances and rising customer expectations, are expected to do more with less. Thus, traditional structures of colleges focused on a hierarchy of jobs and tasks that need to be performed and directed are unlikely to have the capacity or the capabilities to generate the desired improvements in organisational performance.

This traditional view is now giving way to a perception of organisations as collections of activities that add value to customers and the organisation itself: process-based, partnership-based and customer-focused, they are made up of team and often project-orientated structures. In this scenario, where organisational and individual development are seen as a single process of relationships, there is a renewed focus on the middle managers. Such people not only carry responsibility for their own performance but also are integral to developing the frameworks that encourage creativity in others and organisational learning.

How do middle managers see their role? Do colleges provide the frameworks and the structures that allow middle managers to become performance developers or lead their staff to change the way that they both manage and learn? How do middle managers see their role in leading organisational performance and achievement?

Context and leadership

Gareth Morgan (1996) has consistently challenged us to organise in new ways, in creative ways that allow us to do new things. In order to do that we need to reassess, if not reinvent, the leadership function. Evidence-based knowledge of what makes successful leaders remains elusive. Successive leadership theories from the transactional to the transformational have been refined by notions of invitational leadership, emphasising the ability of managers to invite and persuade others to do something, and moral leadership.

What is clear is that traditionally leadership theories have underplayed the importance of context. Traditional notions of the solitary heroic leader have led us to focus too much on the actors themselves and too little on the stage or context on which they play their part. The importance of context is further emphasised by Gray (1995), in debating whether resulting structures are or are not important in relation to effectiveness. Context as a critical determinant of effective leadership is confirmed by Bassett-Jones and Brewer (1998) who, in a study of 14 FE colleges, asserted: 'Indifferent management can be good enough to secure survival in some contexts, while even talented leadership can fail to prevent closure or amalgamation in others.'

Yet few studies have sought opinions of leadership in further education from those who have experienced the realities of leadership in times of rapid change, ie middle management. What people at all levels say and do creates immediate reciprocal perceptions in others (Somekh et al 1999). So, the way that the relationships, the infrastructure and the activities of the college are developed has to be the catalyst in making the college responsive to change. The responsiveness and its dynamism is changed by listening to the middle manager's voice.

Methods

Listening to the 'voice' of the shop floor, of both internal as well as external customers, has superseded 'management by walking about'. The voice of the middle manager arises from the richest of contextual settings where role conflict, role ambiguity and role incompatibility occur naturally. Simultaneously, middle managers find themselves both reskilled and deskilled as their role changes from being a leading professional to, effectively, being a line manager in many traditional college settings.

The perceptions of middle managers of their role and work is a favourable one for attitude research. We decided to use three focus groups of middle managers, as it is not possible to assess a disposition or an attitude by means of a single question or statement. This decision was based on the belief that the quality of articulation and interpretation of personal accounts is enhanced within small groups. The discussion of individual accounts focused on attitudes towards employment, leadership, individual and organisational performance. Examples of general questions asked were:

- What do you like/dislike most about your work as a manager?
- What would you see as your greatest achievement as a manager?
- What gives you job satisfaction?
- To what extent have you been able to implement your action plans?
- What are the key problems or changes to personal management issues that are college-wide which affect the way you do your job?

Examples of more specific questions about the relationship of middle managers to the organisation include:

- Could you say something about your ability to influence college policy?
- What was your role in this process?
- Are senior management accessible?
- Are you stretched and interested in your work?
- What is stretching you?
- What staff development opportunities are provided/expected?

Some comments from middle managers are quoted below at appropriate points in the text.

Structure is the framework an organisation develops in order to achieve its objectives. Traditionally researchers have recognised the powerful, informal 'shadow' structure and the formal or 'bone' structure. Senge (1990) introduced a third structure, the systemic structure, to include the attitude and perceptions of staff, the way decisions are made and other operational dimensions. This systemic structure is key to the reframing of further education through a reappraisal of the relationship between the individual and the organisation. This will be the task of leadership at the start of the 21st century.

There is an idealism at the top but somehow it all goes wrong in the middle.

Everything is on the hoof. You cannot have rapid change without taking time to think it through. We do not have the luxury of being able to bring staff together, we are five teams of one.

We are initiative driven not leadership driven. It is all go for funding but we don't plan our resources to implement the programmes effectively.

Consultation, we pay lip service to it, and ask is this what we are going to be doing next?

For leaders in further education, the real problem in creating structural change is the mental image that managers, particularly middle managers, carry with them of the college as an organisation. Recently, the 'frame factors' whether legal, economic or organisational, have over-dominated management practices and failed to release resources for innovation. The social organisation of the colleges has become neglected to the extent that the individual has become subordinate to college policies, and attempts at bottom-up new ways of working can be construed as criticism of the existing form. Hence, many college structures may be thought of as comparatively resilient and static. While individuals have been successful under the law of the jungle, roles and functions in colleges frequently become fixed and change is made more difficult because the twin allocation of power and resources reinforce existing practice. Thus self-renewal needs to be seen as a participative activity. When roles and functions become more rigid and less easy to change, the motivation and attitude towards change of middle managers is critical to redefining and leading the college's ability to reframe and represent structure as strategy, ie its people become its strategic capability.

The capacity to develop colleges as organisations for the 21st century through the development of the individual reasserts the key role of middle managers. Similarly, raising performance is unlikely to be significantly improved by any measures that fail to recognise that systemic structures themselves enable middle managers to work more or less effectively.

We go from one inspection to another inspection; they become the only measure of effective management. Pretty up the documentation, accountability is in the files rather than the people.

I was coordinating not managing whilst being told I am a manager. Actually I can perform better than I do at present.

The expectation that senior managers will provide enabling frameworks and an accompanying ethos is well documented in the schools sector. Tabberer et al (1996) found that structural frameworks either directly supported or constrained teachers' effectiveness in classrooms. If the same is true in further education, then the interface between the individual and the organisation is critical. Leaders must create structures that enable rather than disable performance improvement.

There is a better balance, once you know the way they are looking at us. You need to know the financial allocations and their effects. Curriculum policy is then more strategic.

They are restructuring the Business Support Service, with all the uncertainty over staffing, while I am trying to implement an IT strategy.

Research across the new public services has identified evidence that the sphere of professional autonomy from line management has continued to shrink. Hoggett (1996, p25) argued that rather than having seen incorporation as a vehicle to reshape their own corporate structures, in further education, decentralisation and self-management often became ' ... a vehicle through which local managers are accorded the doubtful privilege of performing cutback operations themselves, rather than having them imposed from above'.

Since incorporation, middle managers have become more conditioned to hierarchies. In contrast, the authority of top management over middle management appears to have grown through enhanced financial and personnel power. The empowerment of principals has allowed some of those same principals to become expert at disempowering their own staff, using the pre-inspection period deliberately to disenfrachise staff, causing a crisis of credibility in their own worth. The often depressing state of staff relations in the sector has been well rehearsed and documented. (Taubmann 2000). Yet there is a sense of empowerment when middle managers begin to see themselves as the start point of 'leadership' and of effective practices.

The letting go of a personal viewpoint is necessary in order to have a more strategic approach. You need patience, situations are always evolving and you need to accept this.

It was totally liberating to see change as the norm. I have learnt to take time out. You have to do it as the benefits are fourfold.

Extending the middle managers' repertoire through management development

Middle managers have progressively extended their repertoire since incorporation. However, for this group, management development and training is often optional and expensive, with many middle managers expected to do this in their own time. This is in contrast to their own senior managers. The professional development of college principals is determined by the principals themselves, whereas the professional development of the hapless middle manager has been determined through professional development review.

Across the sector there is great variability in the range of activities undertaken, from higher degrees to the competence-led integrated frameworks of the Management Charter Initiative and the FENTO standards. More disturbing is the comparison with their counterparts in the schools sector where middle managers, whether subject leaders or aspiring headteachers already attuned to national standards, will benefit from the newly established National College for School Leadership (DfEE 1999). Research from the corporate sector suggests that caution is needed in adopting the standards-led approach to leadership and management development. The emphasis on standards and competence, so valued in the schools sector, is predominantly outcomes-led, whereas successful organisations outside the sector are by their nature process driven.

Working with middle managers at Cranfield, Butcher et al (1997) recognised the emerging ideas of non-linear change and the reality of complex adaptive systems in which individual development is the main driver of organisation development. They argue convincingly that managers cannot be sufficiently developed through the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competencies. Their research led them to a broader developmental frame based on four elements, which they labelled meta-abilities. These were: cognition, emotional resilience, self-knowledge and personal drive. The combining of these four elements leads to a process of transition or critical disposition to become leaders. Structures and organisations are changed by what these leaders do.

More importantly, Butcher et al claim that once personal development has been initiated, then individual managers influence their organisation in three significant ways:

- through improving their own personal practice as managers
- through extending their personal sphere of influence
- through providing a critical perspective and changing their organisation.

Their key message from the corporate sector is one of impact: that success at the personal level is inextricably linked to success in changing the organisation. Conversely, those managers who did not succeed in having the desired impact on their organisations also struggled with their own individual development. This dialectic between the organisation and the individual again increasingly focuses on the emergence of organisational forms in which the responsibilities of the individuals are becoming the primary focus.

Summary

If colleges are to respond to new ways of working and if the organisational capacity of the college is to be enhanced to tackle increasingly complex systematic change, then a focus on the status, the management development and the leadership roles of middle managers is timely. Do we have enough middle managers? Do they get the right kind of support?

Control exhibited through structures acts as the glue that holds many colleges together. Replacing the glue of control with the glue of trust has to start with a reassessment of the critical contribution of middle managers to organisational performance in our present colleges.

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Team leaders make a difference in raising achievement!

5

CHRIS HORSFALL

Introduction

The earlier articles provide research information and viewpoints about the concept of leadership and its application to raising achievement in the college context. As such, they fill a purpose that is essentially one of dissemination leading to reflection and discussion. This article describes two other outcomes. It begins with an account of the way in which design of a short training course, first delivered within FEDA's Raising Quality and Achievement (RQA) Programme, was informed by the literature review. It continues by outlining our plans for further research intended to deepen our knowledge of leadership as a concept that is held and put into practice at team-leader level in colleges. In turn, we hope that such knowledge will itself lead to further dissemination and will stand alongside delegate course evaluation comment as a basis against which to improve our course design. In short, we are trying to build a loop of connections between research effort, course design and dissemination of information.

Putting theory into practice by staff development

Grounded in research

Our intention was to generalise from the theory, of which the preceding articles provide a summary, and to create a staff development course that tried to put the theory into practice. We have done this as part of the RQA Programme's work with college staff. Leadership programmes already exist for principals, senior and middle managers. The 'gap' in such training is at lower levels that are closer to classroom delivery. That is the 'gap' we seek to fill.

Course construction was based on a number of propositions. Many of these are research based and can be found in the preceding articles. Although much of the content of those articles is based upon the work of principals, or senior managers, the points they make have a certain generality about them. The propositions have a very firm 'people' focus, that of the team leader working with team members. Here is the real basis of the 'leadership' factor and its differentiation from management system-based approaches towards the conduct of activities and of organisations. The propositions include the following:

- Leadership involves influencing people to achieve things through coordinated or joint activity.
- Leadership can be exerted at all points in an organisation. It is not restricted to managers, let alone to those at strategic or senior levels.
- Individual people exercise leadership. It is not found only in those with specific positional roles to play.
- Leadership takes place in specific contexts, some of which are short-lived while others are in a longer process of transition. It is associated with achievement of an objective or set of objectives as much as it is associated with structures.
- Leader–follower relationships are not permanent. Individuals can be followers in one team at the same time as they are leaders in another team; an individual can be a leader today and a follower tomorrow. When leader–follower relationships are based on common, agreed activity, joint action has the potential to create a partnership rather than a leader–follower situation.
- People at all levels can make a difference; professional teachers seek to ensure that students learn and achieve educational goals and believe that they can influence student learning.
- Combining with others to achieve an agreed goal creates a synergy that makes the outcome more likely to be reached and with less personal cost. In some cases, synergy and shared agreements over objectives and actions may be so strong that partnership displaces the leader–follower relationship among participants.

Strategies to raise student achievement and the role of teams

Variables most closely associated with student learning, the proximal variables (Martinez 2000), will have the greatest impact on student achievement. Close scrutiny of the elements that make up these variables reveals that many of them include issues to do with the structure of learning, with curriculum choice, with evaluation and monitoring of student progress and with student support to name but a few. In other words, proximal variables are not associated only with classroom teacher–student interactions. The nature of course delivery in colleges and the range of options that make up an individual student programme require effective teamwork.

Paul Martinez (2000) provides a source book for team leaders and individual teachers. In effect, the college leader may follow one or both of two routes. One route as a leader is to create, maintain and develop an effective team. The other is to have to hand a repertoire of classroom and student-based strategies for the team to adopt. In leadership research terms, this approach draws upon the concept of 'instructional leadership' which emphasises the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the development of students. Hopkins (2000) considers that the purpose of instructional leadership is to facilitate and support an approach to teaching and learning. This is about infusing curriculum content with appropriate instructional strategies selected to achieve the learning goals set for students.

Classroom interactions are important, but we are also saying that other issues play a part and that the response at course-team level is part of the key to the success. We are also clear that individual and collective responsibility, professional and personal, is a key to that successful response. Cultures of empowerment and improvement, encouraged and fostered from the top, help but, even without them, staff at lower levels are not powerless. There is a certain irony in that the notion of 'empowering' others, essential though it is, may carry with it acceptance of the idea that, unless there is 'empowerment' from the top, there is no scope for individual personal initiative or responsibility from those at lower levels in the organisations. Indeed, part of our work at team-leader level is to encourage personal initiative and action from the 'bottom-up'. Interestingly enough, many development projects that focus on raising student achievement fit into this category.

Opinion about the impact of senior leaders on student achievement varies but, according to Hallinger and Heck (1998), who review 15 years of research findings, the contribution of senior leaders does have a small, indirect, but statistically significant effect on school effectiveness and student achievement. It is supportive of course team and class teacher efforts. In terms of the impact of leadership on student achievement, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) report that school principals have a weak but statistically significant impact, whereas the effects of teacher leadership were not, in their work, statistically significant. Even so, many subscribe to the view that the efforts of the latter, because they are closest to the student experience, have a crucial impact. That is why we focus, in our course work and research, at that level.

In addition to the leadership research evidence, the importance of the team factor is illustrated in Stella Dixon's publication *Self-assessment for improvement* (Dixon with Walker 2000). Sets of characteristics are identified that are associated with teams that have, or have not, been successful in their efforts to raise student achievement. These characteristics can operate alongside direct, interventionist, action plans – which could embrace the strategies described by Martinez (2000). They can also be applied in the context of a self-critical team where there is shared commitment to constant critical review and adjustment to seek and to sustain improvement. (The 'self-critical team' approach and a technique for guiding its operation are described in *Self-assessment in practice*, Dixon with Moorse 1997.)

Course design

Our next step was to design a course for college team leaders to provide them with an enhanced capability to build, develop and sustain effective course teams. The course also needed to give them an awareness of the strategies associated with curriculum design and learner support that seem to be associated with improvements in student achievement. The course is built around four main areas of input and a fifth integrating, implementation stage covering:

- Teams

  Seek to meet the needs of the task, the team and of individuals.

  Create, develop and maintain the shared unity of effort that distinguishes teams from groups:
  – agreed and shared objectives
  – shared responsibility to achieve the objectives
  – relationships based on mutual respect, valuation and support.

  Consider the natural 'styles' that each team member brings with them and seek to make best use of the talents of the team.

- Communication

  A constant feature taken for granted and underplayed.

  Two-way; checking for perception and accuracy.

  Used for many purposes, among them the definition, redefinition and evaluation of the task and motivation of the team and individuals.

  Verbal and non-verbal.

  Requires some form of agreement on the manner and methods of communication for the team.

- Motivation

  There are many reasons for staff coming together; they bring different reasons with them.

  Maximise and focus on the positives.

  Minimise the negatives but avoid spending excessive time trying to neutralise things outside of direct control.

  Cater for the task (often something that absorbs our energies and efforts), for the needs of the team and for the needs of the individual.

- Grounding team effort in research and coordinating the effort

  Characteristics of teams that work.

  Successful strategies that raise achievement.

  Techniques to coordinate the process: the cycle of planning, monitoring, evaluating, and sustaining improvement; the choice between the team leader or a project leader as the coordinator and driver of action plans and the concept of the self-critical team.

- Implementation: an opportunity to role play and to reflect upon parts of the process

Post-event consultant support

We also need to try to ensure that the course experience results in specific subsequent action on the part of some, at least, of the delegates. In other words, there is a need to construct things so that, po t-event, the delegate becomes an active change agent rather than the recipient of a course experience with its opportunity for self-reflection. To assist delegates to embed the learning and to help them with their personal role as a team leader (distinguishing that from the pursuit of a particular raising achievement student-based strategy) we now offer post-course consultancy support. This includes the opportunity for a periodic meeting with an external mentor to create a sharing and support network for staff involved in post-course action.

Versions of the course

So far the course has been produced in two versions. The two-day version includes all of the above elements. It also incorporates an opportunity for 'witness sessions' in which college staff who have applied one, or more, of the successful strategies for raising achievement talk about their experience. It can offer the chance for delegates to share their own experiences and views. The two-day version draws staff from a number of colleges and is open to curriculum team leaders and to those with a cross-college role.

A number of colleges have asked for a one-day version solely for a tier of their own staff. Time, in this situation, is a considerable constraint. The witness and role-play sessions are 'immediate casualties' of the compressed time frame. The impact of such a reduced course depends largely on the extent to which the college has built post-event action into its plans. Generalised 'staff development', particularly in a compressed time frame and without the stimulus of external ideas and practices, is likely to have minimal impact on improving student achievement.

Evaluation and future plans

Typical comments from delegates were:

Course time was short – a lot to cover in a short period – a fast pace, sometimes difficult to complete all of the tasks.

Good documentation, good reading, good and interesting company, good ideas. It made me reflect, become aware of my own style and reflect on what is happening within my own college.

Reflecting about the interaction between team leaders and team members and the impact on student achievement must be good practice.

From the course design team's viewpoint it is true to say that it has been difficult to cater, in the same course, for those operating at a subject leader level (the majority) and the occasional delegate with divisional or faculty level responsibility. It is also a challenge to cater for the different needs and experiences of delegates new to the team-leader role alongside those who have had many years of experience at that level. We tried to plan for differences between sixth form and general FE college delegates by providing different role-play scenarios. But the variety of contexts is 'endless': for example should we provide for team leaders with a high team membership of sessional or of part-time staff? We need to balance the size of the stock of syndicate and role-play exercises against the demands that they place on course tutors and the apparently daunting amount of paper put in front of our delegates. Perhaps the greatest challenge in terms of course revision is to move away from approaching motivation from a theory perspective and to look at it through the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation outcomes that successful curriculum design, learner support and teaching strategies can bring about.

Impact and in-depth evaluation of this type of initiative is not easy, but a number of points are identified as areas for attention in the future:

- Activities that improve student achievement and staff satisfaction take time to produce results. These activities take place in college. Activity to identify such impact must not be excessive in its demands and must be undertaken with the voluntary participation of former course delegates.
- Given the goal of raising student achievement, there are issues of course length, of comparability of student groups and of isolating the team effect from all of the other variables that affect student outcomes.
- Perhaps the most feasible impact strategy will be to track the perceptions of our course delegates, those of their line managers and those of their team members. Even so, course delegate numbers will quickly make this a far from easy task!

Further research

In outline:

- The focus of the Leadership for Achievement research project has been narrowed to studying, at college team-leader level, the role of leadership in raising student achievement.
- Starter concepts derived from the literature review include:
  - The view that the leadership concept is likely to be imperfectly understood and partially implemented. Nevertheless, by focusing on what contributes to effectiveness as a leader and on raising student achievement, it will be possible to discern a focus to the results as they emerge.
  - This focus will relate to the concept of 'instructional leadership'. In that way the research will also differentiate itself from the managerial models of leadership that are more concerned with, and remain relevant to, the direction of effective and efficient organisations.
  - Examination of the interview material to see whether we can detect evidence to confirm, or otherwise, the presence of variations in underpinning leadership concepts that are associated with the 'moral' and/or 'participative' styles of leadership. As described in the literature review, such variations reflect differences in the way in which agreed underlying values exist or are formed through discussions.
- The current intention is to conduct the project in two further stages. The first of these is intended to identify the nature and operation of leadership at the team leader level in colleges by working with a small sample of colleges.
- Subsequently, we may either test the findings with a larger random sample of colleges or explore the need for, pilot and produce, if appropriate, a version of the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ)[1] relevant to colleges and other training providers within the learning and skills sector.
- Sharing this information by means of the RQA website (www.rqa.org.uk) so as to achieve a faster means of disseminating our findings than is possible by hard copy publication.

1 The TLQ is the first major UK custom-designed leadership development needs assessment system. It is aimed at potential and current managers and uses a 360-degree multi-rater feedback process. Comparable versions have been developed for use in the National Health Service and in local government. Creating a version for the learning and skills sector offers the potential added benefit of cross-sector comparability. Work to develop TLQ is led by Professor Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe at the Nuffield Institute Centre for Leadership and Management at the University of Leeds.

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This publication looks at leadership, and how it affects student achievement in FE colleges. The four authors approach the subject from different angles, between them covering literature on the subject, the differences between management and leadership, the role of middle managers, and training for team leaders within the Raising Quality and Achievement Programme. The introductory and final chapters pull together some of the overall conclusions reached by these studies and suggest an approach to further research work. The publication is relevant to leaders throughout FE colleges – indeed, one of the main points made is that leadership can be exercised at all levels within the college.

ISBN 1 85338 652 9